



STANDING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

NEWSLETTER | SEPTEMBER 2011

Dear Friend,

It is my pleasure to share with you the first edition of my human rights newsletter. Since the 112th Congress began, we have made meaningful progress in the Senate to promote human rights, but more needs to be done. No matter what side of the aisle you are on, it is our duty as Americans to ensure that all people - regardless of ethnicity, religion, or gender - enjoy basic rights that we so cherish. I hope you will take a moment to look through this newsletter, and future additions, to stay abreast of the work we are doing here in Washington in support of human rights all over the world. I also encourage you to visit the human rights page on my website for additional information.

Sincerely,

Mark Kirk
United States Senator

IRAN

IRANIAN DISSIDENT AWARENESS PROGRAM

Iran remains one of the most prominent human rights violators in the world. The regime has demonstrated their disregard for international law and a lack of respect for human dignity. I am working hard to ensure the struggle of the Iranian people is recognized. To accomplish this, I launched the Iranian Dissident Awareness Program so that members of Congress can stand with the people of Iran.

IMPORTANT LEGISLATION

- ❖ **S. 879** In May, I introduced the bipartisan, bicameral "Iran Human Rights and Democracy Promotion Act of 2011." S. 879 would make it the policy of the United States to deny the Iranian regime the ability to oppress the people of Iran, to fully support democratic activists inside Iran, and to help the Iranian people freely and safely access and share information.
- ❖ **S.RES. 80** On March 1, I introduced a bipartisan resolution condemning the Government of Iran for its state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority. After the mass arrests of Iranian Baha'i in May, I am redoubling efforts in the Senate to address this persecution. To date, 28 Senators have signed on to this resolution.
- ❖ **S.RES.73** I proudly introduced this resolution on February 17 to show support for the Iranian people in their call for a free and democratic Iran. It passed that same day.

IDENTIFYING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSERS

- ❖ In March, I called on the Administration to sanction Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, his Chief of Staff, Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, and other senior Iranian government officials who are directly responsible for and complicit in ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing the commission of serious human rights abuses.

- ❖ Again in April, I – along with Sens. Gillibrand (D-NY), Kyl (R-AZ), and Lieberman (I-CT) - urged Secretary Hillary Clinton to investigate 25 Iranians for possible human rights violations who are listed by the European Union as human rights abusers.
- ❖ To date, no action has been taken against President Ahmadinejad for the government-sponsored persecution, intimidation, and repression against the Iranian people.

WORKING ACROSS THE AISLE

- ❖ As the regime continues to ratchet up the pressure on its people, protecting Iran's persecuted minorities is now more critical than ever. As many of you know, the Lautenberg Amendment, which allows Iranian Baha'i and other religious minorities to seek refuge in the U.S., expired on June 1. Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and I brought together 19 of our colleagues to call for the reauthorization of this critical lifeline.
- ❖ Without this reauthorization, Iran's religious minorities will have to cross the border into Turkey or Pakistan, where conditions are unsafe and access to resettlement is uncertain. I will continue to work with my colleagues to address this issue.

SYRIA

IMPORTANT LEGISLATION

- ❖ **S. 1472** The Syrian government has killed over 2,000 civilians, arrested countless political and human rights activists, and engaged in summary executions. As President Bashar Assad's brutal crackdown continues, I stand as a proud cosponsor of the "Syria Sanctions Act of 2011." S. 1472 imposes sanctions on companies who contribute directly and significantly to the Syrian government's ability to develop its petroleum resources. The message here is clear: the United States will not do business with those who cooperate with the Syrian regime.
- ❖ **S.RES.180** An equally important message was sent to the Syrian people when Senator Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) introduced a resolution earlier in May that expresses support for the people and condemns the human rights violations of the Assad regime.

RUSSIA & BELARUS

IMPORTANT LEGISLATION

- ❖ **S. 1039**– Russia continues to commit human rights violations and impinge on the liberties and freedoms of its citizens. The "Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2011" sends a strong message that the US Senate supports the Russian people in their efforts to realize their full economic potential and advance democracy and human rights. S. 1039 imposes sanctions on individuals responsible for the detention, abuse, or death of Sergei Magnitsky, and also addresses other important cases.
- ❖ **S.RES.105** – The aftermath of the fraudulent elections in Belarus in December 2010 was the most recent chapter of Alexander Lukashenko's brutal rule that has lasted for almost two decades. The Senate passed S.Res. 105 on March 17, sending a strong message of condemnation and calling for the immediate release of all political prisoners and for new elections that meet international standards. As a proud cosponsor of this legislation, I am continuing to monitor human rights violations in Belarus and exploring ways to show support for prisoners of conscience and all Belarusians who are fighting for a democratic future.

IRAQ

SUPPORT FOR IRAQI'S RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

- ❖ The on-going persecution of Assyrian Christians in Iraq is unacceptable. As many of you know, on October 31, 2010, 58 people were killed by an Iraqi Al Qaeda affiliate while attending a worship service at the Our Lady of Salvation Catholic Church in Baghdad.
- ❖ Sadly, this event was not an isolated incident, but a part of a disturbing pattern. In its 2011 annual report, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom reported that at least half of all Christians who lived in Iraq before 2003 have left the country.

- ❖ In July, I attended the Congressional premier of the award-winning documentary “Defying Deletion: The Fight Over Iraq’s Ninevah Plains.” As the film shows us, every day Assyrians in Iraq must endure displacement, targeted kidnappings, bombings, assassinations, and other terrors. What we are witnessing is the deliberate de-Christianization of Iraq. Visit defyingdeletion.com to learn more.

LOOKING AHEAD

- ❖ September is promising to be a busy month in the Senate. I am especially passionate about advancing the Iranian Dissident Awareness Program (IDAP), as the situation in Iran becomes increasingly urgent. Human rights in Iraq, Egypt and Belarus are areas that I am also monitoring closely.
- ❖ I recently joined the Internet Freedom Caucus. I am looking forward to working with Senator Robert Casey (D-PA) and others on this important issue that touches so many parts of the world.
- ❖ Lastly, I will continue to engage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to send a message that those all over the world who champion human rights and democracy have allies here in the Senate.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- ❖ It is important that the US Congress sends a strong, unified message that the United States will not be silent while the government of Iran continues to detain, abuse and torture its people. Encourage your Senator or Congressman to become a member of the bipartisan Iranian Dissident Awareness Program.
- ❖ IDAP features a handful of the thousands of talented Iranians who have been, or will be, detained by the regime. Pick one of these profiles to champion yourself – learn about their work, follow their case, and stand with us in solidarity.